

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 10:15 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Special Committee on Aging is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, March 22; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the nomination of Martin Joseph Walsh to be Secretary of Labor as provided under the previous order; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. For the information of Senators, on Monday, after the Senate convenes, we expect to swear in Karen Gibson to be Senate Sergeant at Arms.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous con-

sent that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator CORNYN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, whether the administration wants to call it a challenge or a mess—or pick your word—a calculated word choice does not change the magnitude of what is currently happening on our southern border.

Hundreds of unaccompanied children are being detained on a daily basis, completely overwhelming the capacity of the Border Patrol and Health and Human Services to deal with it—witness the two new centers opened up in Midland, TX, in West Texas, and a new one at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas that will house approximately 300,000 young men.

At one point, there were more than 4,200 children in custody, nearly 3,000 of them held beyond the 72-hour time limit set by the Flores Settlement. For comparison, there were about 2,600 children in custody at any given time during the peak in 2019, so 2,600 now to 4,200.

In many cases, these children don't make the dangerous journey north with their parents but in the care of human smugglers—coyotes, as they are called. Parents pay these smugglers thousands of dollars to bring their children to the United States.

In some cases, along that long, treacherous journey, whether it is from Central America or from Mexico or anywhere else—because these children are not just limited to Mexico and Central America—these children are kidnapped by the smugglers on their way to the border because they know having a child in their custody will give them preferential treatment and allow them to stay in the country. Sadly, we know that, too often, children are mistreated, abused, or even sexually assaulted on the way to the United States.

There is a lot of work that has to be done from the moment the Border Patrol first encounters these children until they are transferred into the custody of Health and Human Services, but the Border Patrol lacks the physical space or the personnel or the resources to provide this number of children with the care and support they need and also to carry out their duties, especially during a deadly pandemic.

On Monday, I spoke with the Border Patrol sector chiefs and the Office of Field Operations Directors from across Texas. We talked about the surge in unaccompanied children and the cascading consequences this crisis has had on our other border missions.

As Border Patrol officers encounter, transport, and care for these children, they are often invariably diverted from their job securing the border, and so security gaps are left along the rest of the border. This is not an accident.

This is really part of the strategy that the human smugglers and drug smugglers have: flood the zone, preoccupy the Border Patrol taking care of children, leaving gaps that can then be exploited, either by more human smugglers or by drug smugglers.

We all know that large amounts of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, fentanyl, and the like come across our southern border. Ninety-two percent, according to the DEA, of all the heroin in the United States comes from Mexico.

So these smugglers and their really criminal organizations that ply in different commodities and different things, they flood the system to distract the Border Patrol and then exploit the vulnerabilities to bring people, drugs, weapons, and money across.

One of the Border Patrol chiefs told me that Customs and Border Protection needs to be able to identify and classify the migrants they meet, and it is being strained, which is impacting national security. For example, last Friday when I was in Carrizo Springs and in Laredo with my friend HENRY CUELLAR, a Democrat representing a border district in Texas along the Rio Grande, the sector chief told us that, just so far this year, migrants from 54 different countries were detained coming across the border in the Del Rio Sector. Now, I think that sort of gives you a better idea that this is not just a localized phenomenon; these are criminal networks with really connections all around the world. If you want to come from Mexico, for example, it will cost you a few thousand bucks. If you want to come from Central America, you pay a little bit more of a premium. If you want to come from Europe or a Middle East country, it will cost you even more. But it is only a matter of money because that is the only thing that these smugglers and these criminal organizations care about.

But then people from 54 different countries, some of which are countries of special interest to the United States for national security purposes—54 countries represented just so far this year in one sector, and I am sure the other Border Patrol sectors have similar stories.

What is more, since October, the Border Patrol has encountered more than 4,000 criminal aliens, nearly double the amount from the previous fiscal year in less than half the time. In order to qualify as a criminal alien, you have committed significant crimes, like assault, battery, domestic violence, sexual offenses, even manslaughter and homicide. Of course, these are just the ones we know about and who were actually detained. Many more—we don't know how many more, but many more get through unobstructed across the border.

While Border Patrol is overwhelmed by the sheer number of people crossing